

Changes in requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic

Date: May 4, 2020

To: Child Development Services grantees and contractors

From: Deb Swenson-Klatt, Child Development Services Manager

RE: Temporary changes to policies and requirements for Parent Aware

Background

On March 13, 2020, Governor Tim Walz declared a peacetime emergency to protect Minnesotans from the infectious disease known as COVID-19. As part of the state government response to the emergency, state agencies were asked to prioritize services and change program requirements to respond to the changing needs of Minnesotans during this crisis. This memo reflects changes made to grants and contracts overseen by Child Development Services that include the implementation of the quality rating process for early care and education programs participating in Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Duration of policy changes

These changes are in effect as of April 10, 2020, until the peacetime emergency ends.

Impacted grantees and contractors

- Child Care Aware local agencies
- Child Care Aware of Minnesota statewide coordinating office grant contracts and one professional technical contract for Parent Aware Raters
- Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care, a program of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- University of Minnesota, Center for Early Education and Development
- Achieve – The MN Center for Professional Development
- New World, the organization that supports Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Professional Development Registry

Changes approved

The following temporary policy changes are approved to improve the ability of **child care and early education programs** to participate in Parent Aware during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Flexibility will be provided in meeting requirements and deadlines for applying for Ratings, and in extending the end date for Parent Aware Ratings scheduled to expire during the period of the public health crisis, per [Gov. Walz' March 15 letter to child care providers](#) sent after [Executive Order 20-02](#).
- Professional development requirements will be reduced or adjusted for Ratings to align with temporary modifications made by the Minnesota Department of Human Services for licensing and certification standards for child care centers and family child care providers.
- The department will waive the requirement that programs must be actively providing care to at least one child ranging in age from birth to kindergarten entry in order to maintain their Rating or participate.
- The department will waive the CLASS observation requirement for child care programs with preschool classrooms seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating; optional observations at a later date in the next fiscal year will be permitted.
- Requirements for programs to submit hard copy documents will be waived, and electronic transfers will be allowed.

Child Development Services is approved to provide the following flexibility and guidance for **grantees and contractors** that support Parent Aware during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Flexibility will be allowed in each contract to implement the temporary policy changes for programs listed above, redirecting staff capacity and modifying timelines, services, and deliverables to best serve the changing needs of child care providers.
- Grantees and contractors will be released from all travel requirements.
- In-person services to child care providers, including coaching, training, observations and technical assistance, along with staff development, planned in-person convenings, and community engagement, will instead be completed remotely, postponed or expanded as needed.
- Unspent funds budgeted for Parent Aware grants may be carried forward to Fiscal Year 2021.
- Requirements to submit hard copy documents are waived or postponed, and data-secure electronic transfer and storage is permitted.
- Targets for performance measures, such as numbers of providers served, may be waived, though data collection and reporting on these performance measures must be continued.

Impacts for grantees and contractors

Changes to contract requirements and deliverables will vary by contract. As needed, Fiscal Year 2020 contract funds will be permitted to carry over into the next fiscal year to implement these changes. Impacted grantees will be contacted by their Child Development Services project managers with details about how these approved changes will apply to their contracts. Contract amendments will be needed in some cases.